

Quaker Equality Week – What Next?

This invitation to join in a Quaker Living Wage Campaign arises from the meeting on 20 June 2015 in Manchester to consider how Quaker Equality Week might be followed up.



20 June Central Manchester FMH

Minute Quaker Equality Week - what next?

We have spent the day together sharing experiences of Equality Week activities and considering how to build on what has already been achieved. We have looked at the challenges that lie ahead.

We ask Manchester & Warrington Social Justice Group together with other Friends to consider how Minute 36 (2015) can be made a reality in our Meetings.



An initiative of
Lancaster
Quaker Meeting

We also wish to work on a Living Wage Campaign and ask Lancaster Meeting to consider leading on this.

We valued the support, advice and facilities that Friends House gave to those organising Equality Week and ask for continued collaboration on future work on equality.

A Quaker Living Wage Campaign

On Sunday 5 July 2015 Lancaster Meeting accepted that invitation to lead a Living Wage Campaign in the Society and have prepared this pack of materials to support Meetings that wish to join in.

Whilst we welcome the rise in the national minimum wage announced in the summer budget it falls short of The Living Wage currently calculated at £8.75 and The London Living Wage at £10.20. These are Living Wages reflecting the cost of living and the availability of working tax credits. The rates of these will be independently recalculated each year for November and will be available on The Living Wage Foundation's website www.livingwage.org.uk

Our message is simple: **a living wage should pay enough to be lived on.**

Why is Lancaster Meeting leading this campaign?

One of our Members attended the 'Food banks are Not Enough Quaker Conference' in Birmingham on 29 November 2014. The information given really spoke to her and she felt strongly led to do something practical when she got back to Lancaster. Lancaster Meeting supported the idea of action prior to Christmas initially witnessing to raise awareness in the city to the fact that none of the large retailers pay the Living Wage and celebrating organisations in our area that do pay it. Engaging with people as we witnessed, listening to their personal stories, hearing their thanks for what we were doing helped us to understand the relevance of our campaigning and the urgency needed to challenge the low wage economy we live in. We built the campaign into our Quaker Equality Week activities, witnessing further and writing to the Co-operative Group about their non-payment of The Living Wage. We continued witnessing in the period prior to the election.

In work poverty is of particular concern. In a society that requires people to work, it is wrong that work does not provide sufficient income for people to live without the constant stress of juggling basic bills for food, rent, fuel, transport and clothing and recourse to using food banks. The national minimum wage, whilst to be applauded for giving women equality of pay and setting a base line, is being misused by many employers. It now traps people in inescapable low paid work and drives them into inescapable debt. They cannot afford to take time out to retrain to achieve better paid work. Work does not provide a way out of poverty for those on low wages and they do not feel valued.

By paying tax credits to top up low pay the government agreed that people need a particular level of income to live, yet the minimum wage they set did not provide that income. Now the safety net of working and child tax credits has so changed that many people on the national minimum wage will no longer be able to rely on this additional support to supplement their low wages to the same level as in the past.

Too many children now live without the basic necessities of life, warm homes, sufficient nutrition and a reliable roof over their heads. This kind of childhood deprivation affects people for the rest of their lives leaving its mark on health and wellbeing.

Friends, to begin to alleviate poverty in the UK one of the measures we must work towards is that the 'national living wage' is truly a Living Wage, based on what households need to have an acceptable minimum standard of living. We know that payment of The Living Wage will not transform lives but it would go some way to help relieve the stress experienced in trying to make ends meet and would give to those on low pay a sense that they are valued. It would be just one thread in transforming a complex low wage economy. We believe that change in one part will affect the system in ways that at this stage we have no idea about.

Extract from BYM Minute 36 (2015) entitled: 'Living out our faith in the world – are we ready to meet the challenge?'

As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live.'

Please use this pack of information to discern if/what as a Local and/or Area Meeting you are able to do to support this campaign. As the figures change we will update the documents in this pack and make them available for you to download from our website.

Do contact us if you want further information.

In Friendship

Lancaster Quaker Meeting Quaker Living Wage Project Group
(Ann Morgan, Mo Kelly, Caro Kelly, Elizabeth Roberts and Phil Chandler)

The Meeting House
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1TX

Email: livingwage@lancsquakers.org.uk

Website: www.lancsquakers.org.uk/livingwagecampaign.php